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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED.

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DUNBAR.

THE LONG OVERDUE BIOGRAPHY OF LORD DURHAM.

Two changes have come over the attitude of the governing families of England towards biography. At one time it was not unusual for the letters and papers of a departed statesman to be printed only for private circulation. But with the increasing popular interest in politics which in England dates from about 1820, and with Parliamentary life becoming less and less exclusively the occupation of one class, this practice has long since come to an end; and coincident with this change the reading world has become greatly enlarged. Even after this change there was still the tradition that political correspondence and political autobiography ought not to be published until at least a generation after the death of the authors. This delay was due to the feeling that in a biography or a volume of correspondence there might be statements calculated to hurt the susceptibilities of contemporaries still alive, or even of the sons and daughters of contemporaries. Within the last ten or fifteen years, however, this overdelicacy, which in the past long delayed the publication of many first-class political biographies, has been gradually disappearing. The biographies of Gladstone, Granville, Churchill and Argyll, to go no farther back than 1903, are proofs of this new attitude towards the publication of political correspondence and biography, and of the feeling that for statesmen of achievement it is best for their reputation and of advantage to political history that as little delay as possible should attend the publication of letters that are of really national importance.

The fame of the first Earl of Durham, and also of Earl Grey, the Premier of the Cabinet of 1830-34, of which Durham was so

outstanding a member, has suffered from the older attitude towards political biography; for, although Durham died in 1840, there was no adequate biography of him until Mr. Stuart Reid's "Life and Letters"* appeared; and even yet, although Earl Grey died in 1845, a full and authentic biography—a biography based on letters and private papers—is still lacking. The long delay in the publication of the memoirs of these statesmen is remarkable in the light of the advantage of the newer policy as regards biography; for Grey was Premier of the most epoch-making administration of the nineteenth century. The only administration which in this respect can be compared with that of 1830-34—that of the great Reform Act of 1832—is the Gladstone Administration of 1885-6, which launched England into the Home-Rule controversy; and of this historic administration of 1830-34, of which Grey was Premier, Durham was a member; and on him fell much of the work of drafting the great measure for which the Administration is famous.

The long-delayed "Life and Letters of Lord Durham" must at once be ranked among the great biographies of English statesmen of the nineteenth century. It is of the class to which Parker's "Peel," and Morley's "Gladstone" belong. As a literary achievement its place is alongside the "Life of Peel" rather than alongside Morley's "Life of Gladstone," for it has little of the painstaking care and insight in the sketching of the background of Durham's political activities either in England or Canada that characterize Morley's framework for the varied and long-extended political activities of Gladstone. It must take rank with the great biographies of English statesmen chiefly because of the letters and memoranda which it embodies. It is these which are of importance to students of English political history; especially to those who are interested in the era of reform, which began with the downfall of Wellington's ministry in 1829, and lasted until 1835. The biography appeals also to students of British colonial development; for the era of responsible government in the larger colonies—representative and responsible government such as exists in the Dominion of Canada to-day—began as the result of Durham's mission to Canada at the time of the Rebellion in 1837

* "Life and Letters of the First Earl of Durham (1792-1840)." By Stuart J. Reid. Two volumes. New York: Longmans, Green & Company.

in Upper and Lower Canada, now the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

Durham's Parliamentary and political life extended only from 1813 to 1840. He was of only one Cabinet; and in that held the comparatively unimportant office of Lord Privy Seal. Yet no statesman—certainly no member of the House of Lords—more influenced English Liberalism in its formative period than Durham; while as regards the colonial policy of Great Britain, Durham inaugurated a new era. He went to Canada at a crisis in its history as critical as that which confronted Lord Milner when he went to South Africa in 1897; and as a result there began the era which has witnessed the development of self-government in the larger colonies in North America, Australasia and South Africa, and the rallying of the colonies to the support of Great Britain at the time of the Boer War.

By birth and traditions Durham was a Whig. His traditions and his political and social environment were such that it would not have been surprising had he remained a Whig to the end of the chapter. But his traditions and environment did not hold him to Whiggism; for he was one of the few Whigs who developed into Liberals without reservation or qualification. As John George Lambton he was of the House of Commons—knight of the shire for Durham, where his ancestral possessions and his great collieries lay—until 1828. Then he was created a peer at the instance of Canning. A peerage might have been expected to subdue the Liberalism of Durham. A peerage does subdue the political enthusiasm of most men, especially when as commoners they have been associated with the Liberal party; and at this period—1828-40—such a change would have been characteristic of a Whig; for of the two great parties in English politics in the first forty years of the nineteenth century the Whigs were most jealous of what they described as "their order," and were ever on guard to retain for the Whig oligarchy, as long as was practicable, the political privileges which the Whigs had regarded as peculiarly theirs from as far back as the Revolution of 1688.

No such change came over Durham. His Liberalism was abiding. It was as much to him as his religious faith. With his record as an advocate of reform; with his high standing in Parliament and in the country; and with his close connection with Lord Grey, whose son-in-law he was, it was inevitable that Durham

should be of the Whig Administration which Grey formed after the last of the long series of Tory Ministries in 1829. Except for Durham, the Grey Administration was typically and exclusively Whig. Eleven out of the thirteen Cabinet Ministers were peers or held courtesy titles as heirs of peers. Durham was the only member who could be described as a Liberal; and when the controversies over the Reform Bill were being waged inside the Cabinet, most of the Ministers must have wished that some such mission as that which kept Durham in St. Petersburg from 1835 to 1837, had been found for the exponent of Liberalism at the time Grey was organizing the administration of 1830 to 1834. Excepting for Durham and Lord John Russell there was no enthusiasm for reform among the members of Grey's Cabinet. Enthusiasm for any change in the direction of democracy was never characteristic of the Whigs; and, although the Administration had come into power after Wellington's political downfall, pledged to Parliamentary Reform, the disposition of the Grey Cabinet was to concede just as little as would implement their pledges, and preserve an appearance of consistency for those Whig leaders who had long been associated with the Reform movement.

Durham had no sympathy with this attitude towards the question. He wanted a Parliamentary franchise practically as wide as exists to-day in Great Britain. His aim was to bring every man within the constitution; to give him a part in its working; and also by embodying the principle of the ballot in the Reform Bill to protect him in the exercise of the Parliamentary franchise. He could not carry the Whigs with him in either of these aims; and he did not live to see either of them accomplished; for it was 1872 before the Ballot Act was placed on the Statute-Book; and it was not until the Reform and Redistribution Acts of 1884-5 that the Parliamentary franchise was made as wide as Durham desired when he was of the Committee of the Cabinet which drafted the Reform Bill—a committee of which his colleagues were Lord John Russell, Sir James Graham and Lord Duncannon. Still, while Durham failed in these two points, he was pre-eminently the fighting member of the Administration as regards Parliamentary Reform. Once in the struggle, to Durham retreat was impossible; and it was Durham who insisted, in the last great crisis of the Bill, that Grey should advise William IV to create

a sufficient number of peers to ensure that the Bill should not for the second time be thrown out by the House of Lords. Reluctantly Grey took this extreme step. It was not necessary to create peers; but the fact that the King had committed himself to their creation, if it should be expedient, saved the Bill.

After the Reform Act had been carried Durham's Liberalism, unlike that of Lord John Russell and of most members of the Grey Cabinet, did not undergo any cooling process. The Whig leaders would have liked to close the era with the Reform Bill; but Durham went into the constituencies and showed that much more work in the direction of Reform remained to be done. In 1833 he was advocating a further extension of the Parliamentary franchise; the reform of the municipal corporations; reform in the Established Church; and the establishment of a national system of elementary education. He was a trial to the Whigs, who disliked his enthusiasm and his impulsiveness; but among Liberals, in and out of Parliament, he was more admired and trusted than any peer who before or since his time has taken the lead in Liberal movements. He was the greatest Liberal in the House of Lords in the nineteenth century. Comparatively short as was his political career, he accomplished more for English Liberalism than any man who has been of the peerage; and it is this accomplishment, as well as Durham's part in the development of Liberalism towards the colonies, that gives his "Life and Letters" their significant and honorable place in the literature of political history in the nineteenth century.

EDWARD PORRITT.

JUSSERAND'S ENGLISH LITERATURE.*

HERE in the United States we revived long ago the custom of the Italian Republics who were wont to employ their men of letters as ambassadors to other lands. We sent Irving and Bancroft, Motley and Lowell, to represent us abroad; and on occasion one foreign nation or another has sent us also men of letters. Spain was long represented in Washington by Señor Valera, the author of "Pepita Ximenez"; and Great Britain has just honored herself and us by sending Mr. Bryce, the author of

* "A Literary History of the English People." By J. J. Jusserand. Vol. II, Part I. From the Renaissance to the Civil War. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.